

don't say, 'He's dead,' they say, 'Get me help.' She said, 'We were robbed.' No one says that. They're more worried about the dead body than being robbed. It was very nice. It almost fit to a T everything [they] say."

The Colorado case is just one of more than 500 that Harpster and Adams have examined across the country. The duo have analyzed several Kentucky cases as well, including homicides in Bowling Green and Boone County that are both nearing adjudication.

Boone County Detective Matt Mullins has used 911-call analysis in two ongoing homicide investigations, and intends to use it again in a double homicide he is investigating.

"The two cases I used [their] analysis on, it gave me really good insight," Mullins said. "I think it's an excellent, excellent tool that should be used on any suspicious death or homicide. It will allow you to better form a strategy of how you want to interview your witness or suspect and have a better grasp of what kind of questions you need to ask and understand inconsistencies."

Of all the statements officers get during a homicide investigation, Harpster and Adams said most are contaminated, either by the way the questions are asked or the environment in which the interview is taking place.

"One statement is very pristine and is the least contaminated of all — the 911

call," Harpster said. "What is your emergency?" is an open-ended question and the caller just spills. And, it's recorded.

"So, the point of the program is for us to recognize how valuable these statements are as evidence, then to teach students how to determine the indicators of guilt and indicators of innocence so they can use them," Harpster continued. "Because 30 percent of all murderers call in their own crime pretending to be innocent."

There were roughly 18,000 murders in the United States last year, Harpster said.

"That means 5,400 murderers called in posing as an innocent," he said. "Wouldn't we, as officers, want to know if there was a way we could tell that the person is likely the offender or likely innocent? Wouldn't we want to know either way to allocate our resources and devote a strategy accordingly?"

ANALYZING THE CALL

Adams and Harpster conducted a study during which they evaluated 100 calls from closed cases. The study included 50 callers who were proven guilty of committing the homicide they reported. The other 50 were innocent. As a result of the study, Adams and Harpster recognized a pattern that can assist investigators in determining the caller's guilt. Three questions helped in this examination of calls:

- What was the call about?
- Who was the call about?
- How was the call made? >>

▼ Telecommunicators taking information during a homicide call may be recording the only statement a killer will ever make. Investigators have a unique opportunity to use these early statements to prove the caller innocent or guilty.

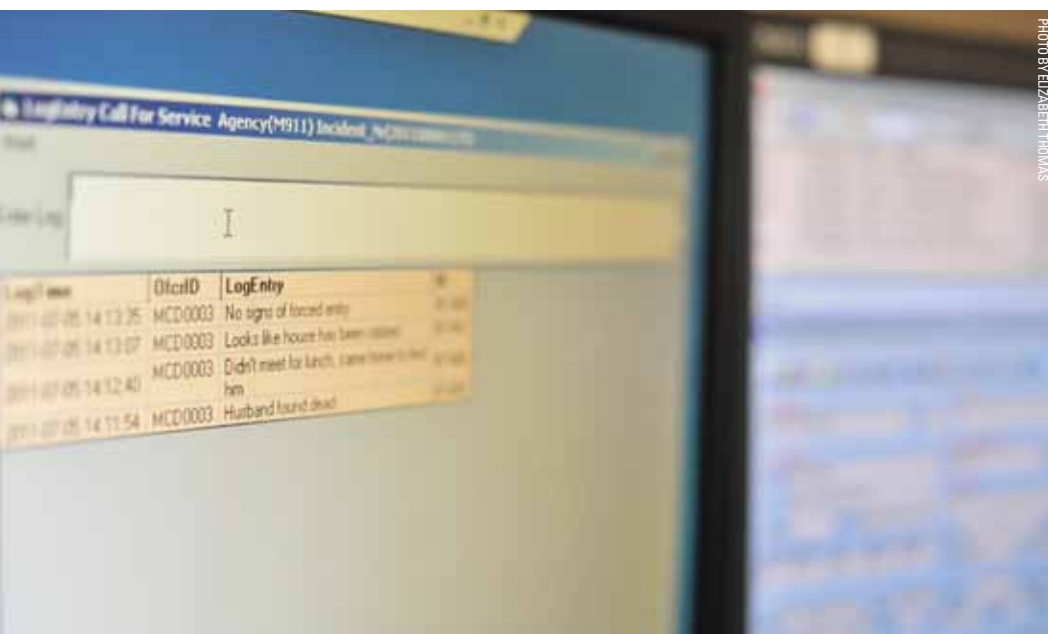


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